



# Maelstrom Rising



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## Chapter 1 by Ciaran O'Neill

23:37, February 9 (Military Calendar)

En route to uncharted solar system (approx. 16000 light years from Walker Confederation Home world) via Riftspace, On board Noblesse-class battleship, Spectre

Shipmaster Arteu Moreau stared out the view port of his vessel. The dark green and black swirls of Riftspace always fascinated him. The tinges of silver dancing through the torrential waves of color would keep most people mesmerized. He haphazardly tapped a sequence of buttons located on his command chair's arm and a holographic screen formed in front of his chair, breaking his view of the space in front of him so that he could concentrate. Moreau brought his arm up and pressed a text file sitting on the lower right hand side of the interface. A multi-page document expanded and filled the screen. Reading over it, he released a sigh. The end of his first year as a Shipmaster was rapidly approaching and to commemorate the occasion, friends Moreau had further up in the hierarchy had recommended him for a new expanse mission. It had been nearly 600 hundred years since the last expanse and now he had the enormous responsibility of seeking out new star systems that were suitable for habitation.

There was a stifling amount of criteria that had to be met before a system could become valid; too much criteria if you asked Moreau. The foremost requirements were that the system had to lack highly intelligent life, consist of at least seven life sustaining planetoids, and must rest on a particularly strong set of spacial ley lines for the Pourrait, the inherent cosmic energy that he and his people could control mentally. There were a dozen other requirements on the list, but

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A voice distracted him from his thoughts, "Shipmaster. We're just about ready to exit Riftspace."

Turning his head toward the voice he found himself looking at a young woman. Slender even for their race and above average in height, Fiona Requas had jet black hair that stretched down to her mid-back and piercing blue eyes. Dressed in her non-combat uniform (which consisted of a white dress shirt, dark gray dress jacket, and dark gray slacks) she looked rather official (though with the rest of the crew much more lax in their dress and form, Moreau wondered how long she'd keep that up). She was fresh from the academy with a rank of Capitaine and held the record for some of the highest aptitude scores in the whole of Walker history. She also held the record of the youngest female Walker to graduate from Vendaera Military Academy at age 21. Despite it being the first tour in her career, Requas was his second-in-command.

"Understood," Moreau replied. He pressed a key on his command chair and the interface dissipated. He readjusted himself in his seat so that he was sitting more upright and then directed a question at Reques, "What do we know about the system we're coming up to?"

This drew a confused look from Reques, "Sir? Don't you already know that information?"

Moreau waved his hand at her, "Yes, but it's always good to recap just prior so that the information is at the forefront of your thoughts."

"I see..." answered the Capitaine. Taking a deep breath, she brought up her datapad and started reading off what was on it, "The system seems to hold 5-9 possibly habitable planets and is located on a Class-7 Pourrait Spacial Ley Line. That's about it. Vendaera's long range sensors can only get accurate readings at ten thousand light years out. This is located well beyond that range."

Nodding, Moreau turned his attention to the view port and said, a smile brewing on his face, "Got it. Take us out of Riftspace whenever you're ready Capitaine."

Requas spun on a dime and made her way to the intercom. She flicked it on and announced, "All hands prepare for Riftspace exit. All stations are to be on stand-by."

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She turned to the crew member standing behind her, "Lieutenant Francis, and ordered, "Navigations, drop us out of Riftspace."

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